Local WIC Contact Information

Anchorage	Municipality of Anchorage	343-4773
& Mat-Su	Public Assistance	269-6528
	Eagle River Clinic	694-2131
	Boniface Clinic	333-1161
	Fort Richardson Anch Neighborhood_Hlth Ctr	384-2033 257-4633
	ANHC Family Practice	273-9348
	Providence Hospital	261-4932
	Palmer	746-4080
Gulf Coast	Wasilla Cordova	376-4080 1-800-457-5731
	Homer	235-5495
	Kenai	1-800-770-4707
	Seward	224-9186
	Kodiak	486-5958
	Valdez/Copper River Basin	1-800-457-5731
Interior	Fairbanks/RCPC	456-2990 ext.26
Alaska	Eielson AFB	377-3119
	Fairbanks/TCC	1-800-478-6682
	Fort Wainwright	353-7714
Northern Alaska	Barrow	1-800-478-6606 ext. 410
	Nome	443-3398
	Kotzebue	1-800-431-3321 ext.5181
Southeast Alaska	Juneau	1-800-330-2229
	Ketchikan Metlakatla Prince of Wales	1-800-854-0878 886-6911 1-866-826-5651
	Sitka	966-8352
Southwest Alaska	Aleutian/Pribilof Isl. Assn. Inc	1-800-478-2742
	Bethel	1-800-764-6459
	Bristol Bay	1-800-478-5201 ext.6292

Alaska WIC Program





WIC Vendor Guide

State of Alaska

Department of Health & Social Services
Division of Public Health
Maternal, Child and Family Health —
Nutrition Services / WIC
P.O. Box 110612
Juneau, AK 99811-0612

July 2002

Notes

This vendor guide supplies basic information for cashiers and store managers about vendor participation in the WIC program. It includes procedures for warrant redemption, potential problems and how to resolve them, suggestions for staff training and a list of WIC staff to contact for further assistance.

Please keep this guide in a handy location so you can refer to it often.

It is VERY IMPORTANT for cashiers to understand the rules and regulations for WIC because incorrect handling of WIC transactions may cause the vendor to lose money or be disqualified from the WIC program.

Cashier Quiz

(Answers on page 11)

	(orr bas	,~ /			
1. WIC participant must sho	w picture	I.D. wher	n redeemin	g a WIC v	warrant.	ΤF
2. If the warrant issue date is from <u>January 1 through January 3</u> January 31, the warrant is valid.						ay is:
December 31, the	T	F				
3. Only the person who recethe store.	may use T	the war	rant at			
4. All participants in the WIC Program have been determinerisk (anemia, poor growth, etc.)					e at nutr F	itional
5. A WIC participant is not r (except formula) and cannot						F
6. If the store is out of a WIG	C food, a i	non-WIC f	ood may be	e substitu	uted. T	F
7. If a store is out of a WIC f participant come back.	food, it is	better to (_	check tha T	an to ha	ve the
8. If two warrants are being as one warrant as long as it				you may T	ring the F	m up
9. The following are WIC cer	reals:					
Rice Krispies	T	F	Raisin Bra	an	T	F
Frosted Flakes	T	F	Kix		T	F
Gerber Rice cereal w/fruit	T	F	Oatmeal		T	F
10. The following are WIC c	heeses:	Am. prod Cheddar Processo		food	T T T	F F F
11. The following are WIC juices:		Any orange juice Any apple juice Hawaiian punch Hi C			T T T T	F F F
12. A WIC participant may g	jet low-iro	n formula	n because i	t is iron-f	ortified.	T F
13. Which items on the war	rant <u>mus</u>	t_be filled	out in the	store?		

Contents

WIC at a Glance	4
Eligibility	4
Benefits	5
Role of WIC Vendors	5
Customer Service	5
Authorized Foods - Infant Formula	6
Minimum Stock Requirements / Exemptions	7
WIC Warrants	9
Description	9
Cashier's Procedure for Accepting Warrants	12
Sample Warrant	14
Changed Dollar Amount Forms	16
Problems with Warrants	17
Farmers Market Nutrition Program	18
WIC Food Pick-up Slips	19
Vendor Assistance & Monitoring	20
Supplies	20
Training	20
Complaints	21
Vendor Compliance	21
Fraud Control	23
Vendor Sanctions & Penalties	23
Questions & Answers	24
Cashier Quiz	26

Local WIC Office Contact Information on back cover

WIC at a Glance

WIC stands for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. This health program provides nutritious food to low income pregnant women, women who have just had a baby, breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5. The Alaska WIC Program receives funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It is administered by the Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services through local health departments, native corporations and social services agencies, known as WIC Local Agencies. In 2001, \$15.1 million was spent on WIC foods in Alaska.

Eligibility

WIC participants must be certified at a local WIC Nutrition Clinic to be at "nutritional risk" because of poor nutrition, other health problems, or both. The nutritional status of each WIC participant is assessed through laboratory tests, measurements and health histories taken by a nutritionist or other health professional before he or she is certified. This certification is only for a specific time period, usually six months, and can be renewed only after another nutritional assessment at the clinic.

Household income must also fall within the WIC Income Eligibility Guidelines.

Benefits

The WIC program saves health care dollars by helping to prevent anemia, increase the birth weight of infants, and improve mental and physical growth. For every dollar spent on WIC, about three dollars are saved in health care costs.

Vendors benefit from the WIC program by increased business at their stores. Many WIC customers do most of their grocery shopping at the store where they use their WIC warrants. Stores must be approved as WIC vendors to accept warrants.

- 1. the amounts shown have not been altered:
- 2. the participant is buying foods only in the amount shown; and
- 3. the participant is buying the correct WIC foods.

If it is still over the limit, do not complete the transaction. Contact your Local WIC Agency for assistance.

5. Can fruit drink be substituted for juice?

No. Fruit drinks like Tang, Hi-C, or Kool Aid, etc, do not meet nutritional requirements for the WIC Program and therefore are not authorized. For the same reason, cheese foods are not allowed on the Program, and only certain cereals are allowed.

6. What should be done with participants who are abusive or try to purchase non-WIC items?

WIC participants are responsible for using WIC warrants correctly. If a WIC participant tries to purchase non-WIC items or is abusive, please inform the Local or State WIC Agency. You may also use the vendor complaint form provided in the Vendor Manual. Follow-up action will be taken by the WIC Program with participants who are abusive or non-compliant

Questions and Answers

1. It seems like a lot of rules to follow. Are they really necessary?

Yes, these rules are necessary to make sure that the WIC Program is working the way it is intended. The WIC participant is instructed how to shop with the WIC warrant and what foods are allowed. But, <u>cashiers are also responsible</u> for selling only the foods and amounts listed on the WIC warrant.

2. What happens if we don't have all of the WIC food items?

When the WIC Vendor Agreement was signed, you agreed to carry a minimum stock of WIC foods. This is a serious responsibility. If your store cannot stock WIC foods in the required amounts, then your WIC Vendor Agreement will be terminated. Only the foods (and brands) listed on the WIC Food List can be purchased with WIC warrants. The authorized foods have been carefully selected to give the WIC participant the nutrients he/she needs. Other foods may not give these same nutrients. Remember, WIC treats and prevents health problems relating to poor diet, so the kinds of foods purchased make a difference!

3. What happens if the cost of the foods is less than the "Not to Exceed" amount? Should the participant be allowed to get more food or be given change?

No! The "Not to Exceed" limit is put on the warrant as a safeguard. WIC purchases are less than this amount. Do not give change to the participant in <u>any</u> WIC transaction.

4. What happens if the purchase price exceeds the "Not to Exceed" amount?

The "Not to Exceed" amount has been established after carefully calculating retail price ranges for WIC foods based on current prices. If the warrant exceeds the maximum limit, please check again to make sure that:

Role of WIC Vendors

Vendors play an essential role in the WIC program as they provide the nutritious foods participants may purchase with their WIC warrants. WIC participants may use their warrants only at stores that are authorized as WIC vendors. The store must have a valid, signed agreement with the Alaska WIC Program. The WIC Vendor Agreement includes detailed information and requirements for vendors. This booklet contains an overview of Mandatory Stock Requirements, Warrant Redemption Procedures and Sanctions and Penalties.

Customer Service

The WIC Vendor Agreement requires that WIC participants be treated the same as other customers. To provide excellent customer service it is important to be friendly, courteous and helpful to ALL customers. If customers have questions or need assistance, LISTEN to them; if you are not able to help or comply with a request, be tactful and pleasant while explaining the reason.

It is vital to the success of the WIC program that participants are able to obtain their prescribed foods.

Authorized WIC Foods

The foods selected for the Alaska WIC Program must meet certain standards for nutritional value. They are generally high in protein, vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin C, calcium and iron. Specific brands may be chosen because they meet the nutritional requirements and are readily available, and low cost may also be a factor in the selection process. Keeping food costs down allows more participants to benefit from the program.

A copy of the current *WIC Food List* should be kept at each check stand where it readily available for reference. It

contains full-color pictures of the approved brands in each category, with additional information about package sizes allowed and flavors or ingredients that are allowed or prohibited.

For assistance in determining if a particular food item is allowed, you may contact the Local WIC Agency or the State WIC Office at the phone numbers listed in the

at the phone numbers listed in the

back of this booklet.

Infant Formula

The Alaska WIC Program contracts with formula companies for rebates which bring additional funds to the State, allowing more Alaskans to participate in the program. Participants are required to use contract formulas, unless there is a medical reason that another formula is necessary. WIC vendors, except those in rural areas, are required to stock the WIC contract formulas, (one milk-based and one soy-based formula). If there are any changes in the contract brand or formula stocking requirements, the vendor will be informed

Vendor Sanctions & Penalties

Vendors may be given penalty points for violations of WIC Program regulations, depending on the nature, frequency and severity of the offense(s). The following are subject to ten (10) penalty points for each single violation:

- Not paying WIC monetary claims within 3 weeks of notification.
- Failure to maintain an acceptable record of inventory of WIC foods.
- Failure to have the required minimum inventory of WIC foods during two or more monitoring visits.

Penalty points accrue throughout the two year contract period. Accumulation of 20 or more penalty points may result in probation, suspension or disqualification as a WIC vendor.

If a WIC vendor is disqualified from participating in the Food Stamp Program, they will also be disqualified from the WIC Program and vice versa.

Federal regulations require mandatory sanctions to be imposed in cases of significant program abuse, such as trafficking in WIC warrants or selling firearms, explosives, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages or tobacco products in exchange for WIC warrants. Patterns of overcharging WIC customers, such as charging them higher prices than others or charging for items not received, may also result in federal sanctions.

compliance. Secret Shoppers are WIC participants that have received training in correct warrant redemption procedures. They make their regular WIC purchases at the store and report back to the State Office if the transaction was handled correctly or if there were problems or errors. Store management will be notified of the results and cashiers that do a good job will receive an award and recognition. Secret Shoppers do not intentionally try to get store employees to perform or allow prohibited activities.

Compliance Buys, in which a representative of the WIC program poses as a WIC participant or proxy, may also be used to check vendor compliance. During these investigations, the undercover shopper may try to make WIC transactions. The main objectives of vendor monitoring are to reduce errors and noncompliance, help stores minimize losses and claims from WIC and assist vendor staff in improving customer service.

If a vendor continues to have violations, (for instance collecting sales tax or giving change or cash refunds,) after additional training, the State Office may take administrative action such as issuing a warning or placing the vendor on probation.

Fraud Control

Most violations of WIC regulations are due to mistakes or misunderstandings, not deliberate fraud or abuse. However, the State WIC Program is required to take steps to prevent and detect fraudulent activities on the part of vendors or WIC participants.



well in advance.

Minimum Stock Requirements

By signing the Alaska WIC Vendor Agreement, the vendor agrees to stock minimum amounts of WIC food items <u>at all times</u>. All WIC foods on the shelves must have current shelf dates; if the manufacturer's expiration date has passed, the item should be taken off the shelf. The Vendor Agreement contains the current minimum stock requirements.

If a vendor fails to have the required minimum stock of WIC items on at least two monitoring visits by the Local Agency, penalty points will be assessed. This can lead to probation, suspension or disqualification from the WIC program.

Exemptions from Stock Requirements

Some vendors in Alaska bush communities are exempt from the requirement to stock fresh milk and infant cereal. In these areas, participants may have evaporated, powdered or UHT milk specified on their warrants. Vendors that are exempt will be notified by the Local WIC Agency if there is a need for infant cereal to be stocked to meet the needs of program participants.

Pharmacies that are authorized vendors for special infant formulas are exempt from the requirement to stock other WIC foods.



The WIC program cannot succeed without the cooperation of vendors like you!



Information about upcoming training sessions and materials will be published in the quarterly Vendor Newsletter.

The Local WIC Agency may be contacted to schedule a training session for store management and/or staff. Additional training for staff unable to attend may be delegated to store management or corporate trainers.

Complaints

The Local WIC Agency provides WIC participants with training on using WIC warrants correctly. There may still be confusion about what foods are allowed and Local Agency or State Office staff may be contacted for assistance, if necessary. If a WIC participant insists on trying to purchase non-WIC items or becomes abusive, please inform the Local or State Agency. The Vendor Manual also contains a Complaint Form that may be submitted to the Local Agency to document the incident. Follow-up action will be taken by the WIC program with participants that are abusive or non-compliant.

The Complaint Form may also be used by WIC participants to report problems with a vendor, such as WIC items not in stock or abusive treatment by an employee.

Vendor Compliance

Monitoring Visits to the store will be conducted regularly by staff from the Local WIC Agency. They will check the quantities of stock on the shelf, and expiration dates on items, to see if the required minimum stock is available. They will also review procedures being used for warrant redemption and provide training. Cashiers may be given a simple quiz to test their knowledge of WIC rules and procedures.

"Secret Shoppers" may also be used to monitor vendor

Vendor Assistance & Monitoring

Supplies

The State WIC Office may provide your store with a variety of materials to make sure WIC shopping and warrant transactions go smoothly for employees and WIC participants. Some of the supplies we can provide include:

- ⇒ Signs and posters stating the store is a WIC Vendor
- ⇒ WIC Food Lists for check stands
- ⇒ Shelf Talkers identifying approved WIC foods
- ⇒ Vendor Number Stamps & Ink
- ⇒ Cashier Training Videos
- ⇒ Changed Dollar Amount forms and reports
- ⇒ WIC Food Pick-up Slips (if applicable)
- ⇒ Recipes or other promotional items (when available)

The State Office also publishes a quarterly Vendor Newsletter highlighting changes in the WIC program, procedures or current issues affecting WIC vendors.

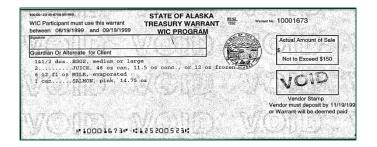
Training

Training is provided for WIC Vendors by the State WIC Office and Local WIC Agency. Training may be presented in various ways, including this Vendor Guide, the Vendor Newsletter, videos, teleconferences, or in person. Regulations require at least one representative from each store to receive training annually, and the training must be "in person" at least once every three years.

WIC Warrants

Description

The WIC warrant is a food prescription that lists the food items the participant may purchase. Each warrant is valid for a specific period of time printed on the front of the warrant. It is drawn upon a State of Alaska account and the store deposits it into its own bank account just like a personal check. The participant may use the warrant at any store that is an authorized WIC vendor.



There is one basic type of WIC warrant. However, there are differences in the kinds and amounts of foods printed on an infant's, child's, or woman's warrant because of their differing nutritional needs.

A warrant made out for an infant usually includes the following items:

- ⇒ iron-fortified infant formula
- ⇒ iron-fortified cereal
- ⇒ fruit juice high in Vitamin C

Women and children's warrants usually include:

- ⇒ milk and/or cheese
- ⇒ fruit juice, high in Vitamin C

- ⇒ eggs
- ⇒ peanut butter or dried beans, peas and lentils
- ⇒ hot or cold cereal

Multiple Warrants—Participants often get more than one warrant for each month so that their prescribed foods, particularly perishable items like eggs and milk, do not have to be purchased all at one time. They may have 2, 3 or more warrants to cash at one time.

Warrant Dates—Warrants can be issued to participants 2 or 3 months ahead of time, especially in areas where it is difficult for them to get to the WIC clinic. However, each warrant can only be used during the valid dates printed on the front of the warrant – participants <u>and</u> cashiers are responsible for checking the dates.

Special WIC Warrants—Sometimes special warrants are issued that may contain special infant formula, UHT or goat milk, canned salmon or tuna, carrots, high calcium juice or other items, such as canned beans instead of dried. WIC participants can get these items **only** if printed on their warrants.

Who Can Use Warrants—Participants or their assigned alternate person (proxy) may shop for WIC approved foods. The Local Agency teaches them how to use WIC warrants. An ID containing a picture OR signature, such as driver's license, school ID, or a vendor approved identification card for cashing checks must be presented by the person purchasing foods with the WIC warrant. The name of the alternate is printed on the warrant.

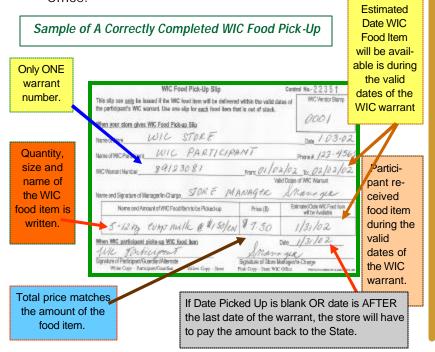
No Discrimination—The Vendor Agreement prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap.

WIC Food Pick-Up Slips

Some vendors in bush Alaska are authorized to issue "pick-up slips" in situations when severe weather problems delays freight shipments. Use of pick-up slips is monitored closely by the State WIC Office. The illustration below shows the correct procedure for issuing a pick-up slip. Important points to remember when issuing a pick-up slip:

- Item(s) MUST be received by WIC participant during VALID DATES of the WIC warrant.
- If freight may not be delivered until AFTER the last date of the warrant, DO NOT issue a pick-up slip.
- A separate pick-up slip should be issued for EACH different item.
- Only ONE warrant should be listed on each pick-up slip.

 Manager and participant MUST sign & date white copy when item is picked up and it MUST be sent to State WIC Office.



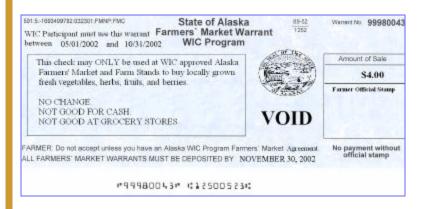
 Vendor Number NOT stamped on the warrant. (Each authorized vendor is assigned a Vendor Number and issued a rubber stamp that must be imprinted on the front of each warrant. Most stores have their Vendor Number stamped on the warrants by their accounting or bookkeeping office before warrants are deposited at the bank.) **Special Offers**—If the store offers special coupons or promotions, such as "buy one, get one free" to other customers they must also be available to WIC customers. The item being purchased must be a WIC-approved food, but the "free" item does *not* have to be on the WIC Food List.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program



The Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) promotes the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers and farm stands in Alaska. WIC participants may be issued 5 warrants worth \$4 each to be used throughout the growing season. FMNP warrants

CANNOT be used at retail grocery stores and, like regular WIC warrants, they cannot be exchanged for cash.



Answers to Cashier Quiz on page 24:

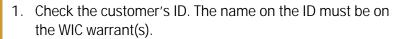
- 1) True
- 2) True, False
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) True
- 6) False
- 7) False
- 8) False
- 9) WIC approved cereals are: Kix and Oatmeal
- 10) WIC approved cheese: Cheddar & American processed
- 11) WIC juices are: Any orange juice
- 12) False
- Signature of guardian or alternate or WIC Participant , Amount of Sale. Vendor Number

Sample FMNP Warrant—CANNOT BE USED AT RETAIL STORES

Cashier's Procedures

(for Accepting WIC Warrants)

Tip—Greet the customer and ask for the WIC warrant(s). Be friendly and courteous.



Tip— A picture **OR** signature ID such as driver's license, school ID, or vendor approved identification for cashing checks should be presented to shop WIC foods.

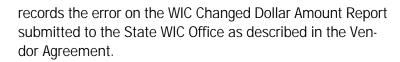
- 2. Check the dates printed on the warrant(s). **Do not** accept a warrant **before** or **after** the dates printed on the warrant.
- 3. Compare the amounts and types of foods selected by the customer with the items printed on the warrant(s). The WIC Food List gives the specific food types and brands. The customer is **not** required to buy <u>all</u> of the foods on the warrant, (except formula) and cannot buy <u>more</u> than the amounts listed. The customer **must** buy <u>all</u> the formula designated on the warrant.

Tip—Separate the items for each warrant as each warrant must be rung up separately. Make sure items being purchased are on the authorized WIC food list — you should have a copy of this list at your check stand.

4. Ring up the items (separating by warrant, if the customer has more than one warrant) and write the total on the warrant. A single warrant cannot exceed \$150.

Tip—Be sure to deduct the amount for any coupons. Do **not** include sales tax in the total. .

5. Have the customer sign the warrant.



Problems with Warrants

WIC warrants are printed at the Local Agencies and issued to participants. Occasionally printer problems may cause warrants to print incorrectly. Warrants should look nearly identical to the sample shown on page 14.

Warrants must be deposited to the vendor's bank within 90 days from the Start Date printed on the front of the warrant. After deposit, the vendor receives payment from the State of Alaska. If warrants are redeemed later than 90 days from the Start Date, the vendor will be requested to reimburse the State.

Certain types of errors made during the warrant redemption process may result in requests that the store pay the amount of the warrant back to the State. The State WIC office performs random inspections of warrants on a monthly basis to check for problems, including:

- Participant or alternate signature NOT on the warrant.
- The amount written incorrectly or, if changed or corrected, NOT initialed by the cashier AND participant.
- Overcharging for WIC items; the total amount of a WIC warrant cannot be more than \$150. WIC customers must be charged the regular shelf price or advertised sale price, whichever is lower.
- Accepting WIC warrants before the Start Date or after the Last Valid Date printed on the front of the warrant.
- Accepting a warrant that appears to have been altered. (If a warrant appears to be altered, refer the customer to the local WIC agency.)

Changed Dollar Amount Forms

During a WIC transaction, a cashier may make an error in writing the amount on the warrant. This may be due to:

- Failure of the customer or cashier to include all WIC items listed on the warrant.
- Including an unauthorized (non-WIC) food
- Inadvertently charging sales tax
- Transposing numbers (such as writing 74.95 instead of \$47.95)
- Entering the total on the wrong warrant, (in cases where the customer has more than one warrant)

Use the following procedure when it is necessary to change the dollar amount in the "Actual Amount of Sale" box because of the errors listed above.

- 1) Draw a single line through the incorrect amount the original amount written should still be readable.
- 2) Write the correct amount next to it.
- 3) The cashier AND the WIC customer must BOTH initial the change on the warrant.
- 4) Attach the corrected cash register receipt tape to the warrant. (The customer does not need the receipt, as cash refunds cannot be given for WIC foods.)
- 5) Fill out a WIC Warrant Dollar Change Slip (see sample) and give it to your manager with the warrant and cash register tape.
 - At end of month the manager or bookkeeper



6. Compare the signature on the warrant with the signature on the customer's ID.

TIP—If the name on the warrant is not the name of the customer redeeming the warrant, the cashier should match the signature on the warrant with the signature on the ID and then write the driver's license or other ID number on the front of the warrant just as they do with other checks.

- 7. Write "WIC" on the back of the cash register receipt.
- 8. Stamp the WIC Vendor Number on the front of the warrant.



Important Points to Remember:

- WIC purchases are tax exempt.
- Do not issue rain checks for WIC foods.
- Do not accept warrants that appear to be altered.
- Do not give change or cash refunds for WIC purchases.
- Treat WIC participants with the same courtesy you show to other customers.
- IF you make an error when you write the amount on the warrant, draw a single line through the incorrect amount and write the correct amount next to it. Both you and the customer must initial the change. Attach the cash register receipt to the warrant and give your manager the reason for the change. (The customer does not need the receipt, as cash refunds cannot be given for WIC foods.)

Sample WIC Warrant

Signature of WIC participant or alternate.

Valid Dates of WIC Warrant—it cannot be used before the first date OR after the last date. Write the actual amount of the sale—only include items purchased with this warrant.

500.00 123 45 6789 081999 ;

WIC Participant must use this warrant between 08/19/1999 and 09/19/1999

STATE OF ALASKA TREASURY WARRANT WIC PROGRAM

89-52 1262 Warrant No. 10001673

Signature.

Guardian Or Alternate for Client

151/2 doz. EGGS, medium or large

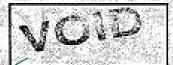
2........JUICE, 46 oz can, 11.5 oz conc., or 12 oz frozen aca

6 12 fl oz MILK, evaporated

1 can..... SALMON, pink, 14.75 oz

Actual Amount of Sale

Not to Exceed \$150



Vendor Stamp
Vendor must deposit by 11/19/199
or Warrant will be deemed paid

10001673 # 125200523#

If items listed on warrant appear to be altered, do NOT accept warrant.

Vendor Number Must be Stamped Here Prior to Deposit